

# **Clark County Comprehensive Plan Update 2000-2001 Public Involvement/Information Plan**

Revised May 23, 2000

## **Overview**

This document has been developed to provide Clark County with a framework for involving the public in discussions leading to an update of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

To develop a draft plan, JLA associates Jamie Damon and Jeanne Lawson initially met with County staff and interviewed each member of the Board of County Commissioners and the chair of the Planning Commission. The Board and staff have now reviewed the draft plan that was developed in response to those conversations. This document, in turn, addresses the issues raised in that review.

The Clark County Board of Commissioners and staff are in agreement that the primary public involvement/information issue for the Comprehensive Plan Update is the need to engage a broader cross section of the Clark County community than ever before. There is much concern among County Commissioners and staff that the majority of residents in Clark County are either unaware or have very limited knowledge of the existence of the County's Comprehensive Plan and what the plan means to them. The lack of foundational understanding of the County's plan for growth by the broader community poses a significant hurdle to engaging residents around the issues involved in the update of the Plan.

Another issue is the need to provide a forum/process for issues to be raised and discussed separate from, yet in coordination with, the Steering Committee and Board of County Commissioners as quickly as possible. This stems from the fact that while there may be a low level of awareness of the Comprehensive Plan among the general public, there are citizens in the county who have been actively involved in and tracking these issues since the adoption of the plan in 1994. These citizens represent a range of citizen groups that have formed in response to growth related issues, have participated in advisory committees and task forces to address challenges to the Comprehensive Plan and have a high level of understanding and strong opinions about the issues. The public

involvement/information framework is designed to bridge the gap between these “two publics,” and begin to develop a “One County” approach to the discussion about how to manage growth in Clark County.

## **Objectives**

Based on the issues discussed above, the objectives for the public involvement and information will be to:

- Achieve a higher level of awareness of the existence of a comprehensive plan.
- Increase understanding of the comprehensive plan’s impact on individual county residents.
- Engage a broader base of the public, expanding beyond those parties who typically participate in public processes.
- Help stakeholders see their concerns in broader context.
- Provide interested citizens with a legitimate forum in which to raise issues that can inform the decisions of the advisory and decision-making bodies for the comprehensive plan.

## **Work Plan**

The public involvement/information framework is organized around the three phases of the Comprehensive Plan Update: Phase I – January through June 2000; Phase II – June – January 2001; and Phase III – January 2001 – December 2001.

### ***Phase I***

Phase I is focused on establishing the “plate” of policy issues for consideration and discussion, which will be determined largely by the Board of County Commissioners in consultation with the Steering Committee. Much of this work will be complete prior to the full engagement of the broader community; however, the beginning of Phase II will include a step to clarify and validate the issues under review.

In order for the public to accept the plate of issues developed during Phase One, two things need to happen:

1. The County must clearly outline the purpose of the update, the issue areas to be resolved and why, and what is not occurring as a part of this update and why. To support this communication, a “Comprehensive Plan Update – What it is/ What it isn’t” document should be developed.
2. The above information needs to be supported by the BOCC, aided by the Steering Committee, and staff. The presentation of the document needs to balance confidence that all of the issue areas have been identified with an attitude of openness to discuss

why this is not a complete revision while listening to concerns, ideas, and issue areas that may need further attention, perhaps in a later effort.

## ***Phase II***

The emphasis in Phase II is on establishing the community values and principles that guide growth in Clark County. In order for residents to support implementation steps later in the process, they need to be given an opportunity to understand and discuss the issues and see that their voices are heard and addressed. This effort can help the BOCC ensure that the policies that emerge from this phase reflect the values and principles of importance to the community. The following is a detailed accounting of the steps involved in Phase II.

### **1. Fact Sheet: “The Comprehensive Plan Update – What it is/What it isn’t”**

As outlined at the end of Phase I, this document will be a critical tool to support communications about the purpose and limitations of the Update.

### **2. Planning Commission/Steering Committee Check-in**

During a Planning Commission Work Session and Steering Committee meeting (or Mayors meeting) the overall public involvement/information approach will be outlined with an opportunity for discussion about Planning Commission and jurisdiction roles and refinement as appropriate. For the Steering Committee, a critical task will be to identify opportunities and needs for coordination with the public involvement activities of the partner jurisdictions.

*Timeframe: As soon as possible, preferably no later than early June for the Steering Committee, and July for the Planning Commission.*

### **3. Broad Public Outreach –Level One**

The broad public information pieces will be pulled together and disseminated at the onset of the involvement process to begin to develop a foundational understanding of the existence of the Comprehensive Plan and the purpose of the Update process. This base of information will be followed by “Level Two” in August with stronger emphasis on soliciting input and involvement of the broader community.

*Timeframe: Beginning June 2000.*

#### **▪ County-Wide Mailing**

A booklet style mailing will go to every household and property owner in the county. The mailing will:

- Present key messages
- Announce the first public event
- Outline the basic components of the existing Comprehensive Plan, including the “What it is/isn’t” parameters regarding the Update

- Solicit participation by including information on how to participate, some initial questions to prompt the public’s thinking about the issue areas, and a response form.

Due to budget constraints, it is anticipated that this would be the only countywide mailing to occur and that responses to this initial mailing would provide a basis for developing a mailing list for future mailings.

- **Web site**

The County’s web site will feature a separate section focused on the Comprehensive Plan Update with more detailed information about the aspects of the plan and links to full documents as appropriate.

- **Media Coordination**

In concert with the countywide mailing and updated web site, press releases will be prepared and meetings with editorial board staff (as appropriate) will be coordinated to heighten the public’s attention to the mailing. Quotes from BOCC and Steering Committee members will be used to increase the legitimacy of the process. Brief interviews will be offered by key BOCC and Steering Committee members to ensure that the community sees all players on board and to underline the importance of broad community understanding and involvement in the Update.

#### **4. Personalized Letters to Past Committee Members**

A letter will be sent to all residents who have served on a county or city task force, focus group, advisory group, or other advisory body relating to growth issues in the county since the adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. To increase the legitimacy of the process and emphasize the importance of participation, the letter should be signed by the Mayor of the jurisdiction for which the citizen has given service or the Board of County Commissioners if appropriate. The letter will announce the beginning of the Update process, thank them for their service to the community, acknowledge the body of knowledge the recipient has regarding growth related issues, and include the “What it is/isn’t” document as well as other informational materials developed. In addition, the letter will invite them to participate in one of six “group interviews” (see detail below).

A letter could also be sent to other community, civic and interest group leaders who may not have served on a committee but have a high level of understanding of the issues and whose participation at this early stage would be advantageous.

*Timeframe: Mid June 2000*

#### **5. Group Interviews**

A series of six to “Group Interviews” will be conducted for recipients of the letter outlined above. The purpose of the interviews is to:

- Provide a forum as quickly as possible to those members of the public who are ready to talk issues now.

- Present the “What it is/isn’t” document in a personal way with representatives of the BOCC, Steering Committee and staff present, and with an opportunity for in depth discussion about the topics that will be included in the Update.
- Develop understanding of the Update process, identify/address issues of concern early, establish clear expectations for participation and roles, gather ideas for crafting messages and questions that will resonate with the broader community.

A handful of follow-up interviews will be conducted if necessary to connect with community leaders who were unable to attend one of the group interviews. It is anticipated that the interviews would be attended by one member of the BOCC and or one member of the Steering Committee, one member of the Planning Commission, one staff person and a facilitator. Anticipated total participant attendance at each meeting is 6-8. The meetings are being conducted as informal interview/discussions, for one and a half to two hours, and are not intended for general public attendance.

*Timeframe: July and early August 2000*

## **6. Broad Public Outreach –Level Two**

Broad Public Outreach Level Two, builds on the basic information foundation established through Level One, by increasing the depth of information shared and adding input opportunities outlined below. Level Two begins to position the community to better participate in the County Perspectives Conference, Round 1 to be held in September. Level Two would also include updating the web site and reconnecting with the media.

*Timeframe: August/September 2000*

### **▪ Statistically Valid Survey**

Conduct a statistically valid, eight to 10 question, random telephone survey, polling a representative sample of the Clark County population regarding growth related questions crafted as a result of the interviews. The survey will be valuable in reaching out to those residents who may not voice their opinion in any other way and could include a very brief educational component about the existence of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **▪ Person -To-Person Information Exchange**

As possible, enlist the assistance of knowledgeable citizens in engaging the broader Clark County public through individual conversations. Those participants from the interviews who are interested in participating and who can present an impartial approach to the issues, would attend an orientation session, which would include training in how to talk with and listen to the public around growth related issues. Participants would use a consistent question and input gathering format, work in teams of two with staff, and would assist in staffing the Kiosk/Listening Posts outlined below. These Listening Posts will be placed at various locations in the County where citizens gather (e.g. the Mall, grocery stores, the fair, outdoor festivals, etc.) The purpose of this tool is to talk with “unengaged” county residents and raise their level of awareness, as well as to glean the issues of importance to them in a one-

on-one, personal way. If citizen participation is not available for this task, the task would be scaled back to a level that would be achievable with staff resources of the county and its partners.

- **Kiosks/Listening Posts**

The County owns two, portable, free standing kiosk display units that can be easily updated with new information. The Kiosks can be placed at the Mall, shopping centers, libraries, banks, and a variety of other locations around the county. The Kiosks can be placed for a week at a time and include a fact sheet and comment form retrieval box. The Kiosks can be combined with some of the Information Exchange participants to create “Listening Posts” that are well suited for placement at events that generate many people (e.g. fairs, festivals, etc.)

- **Presentations/Meetings with Established Groups**

Citizen participants in the Information Exchange could assist in hosting or presenting (in combination with a staff member) the project to a range of established community groups and civic organizations about the growth questions facing the county. These presentations could be structured as “meeting in a box” type meetings where presentation points are outlined, with an introductory PowerPoint presentation or video (in lieu of or in combination with a presenter), handouts are included, and input gathering sheets posing questions developed at the conference are distributed.

## **7. County Perspectives Conference \* Round 1**

The objectives of the conference include:

- Engage a broader cross section of the community on the heels of the summer outreach activities.
- Provide an opportunity for BOCC, Steering Committee, Planning Commission, staff, and knowledgeable citizens to conduct panel presentations, issue area information booths, and small topic, specific discussion groups focused on the various issue areas under review in the Update.
- Develop a summary of the proceedings, which will serve as the basis for further discussion by topic specific discussion groups that will continue between Round 1 and Round 2 of the conference.

The conference will include an opening plenary, break out sessions and a closing plenary. The use of “Key Pad” technology can be used to help efficiently identify prevalent ideas and questions around each of the Update topic areas and ranges of opinions, minimizing opportunities for individuals to monopolize the discussion and removing “personality” associations with the responses. In addition, large group sessions can be organized with participants in table groupings to further discussion at the small group level. In any gathering of this type, it is important to establish the context that this is only one form of input on the issue and to clarify when and how final decisions on issues would be made.

---

\* This is a “working” title for the event, and warrants additional discussion.

The conference will be held in mid September, on a Saturday, from approximately 8:30am – 12:30pm at the Salmon Creek Campus of WSU. The conference will be announced through the summer outreach activities, targeted mailings, and display ads.

*Timeframe: Mid September 2000*

## **8. Broad Public Outreach – Level Three**

Level Three of the Broad Public Outreach serves as an information bridge between Rounds 1 and 2 of the conference. Outcomes of the conference will be summarized in an Update Newsletter mailed to the conference participants, and the established mailing list. It will be important to reconnect with the media regarding the outcomes, of the conference, next steps in the process, additional questions for further public discussion, and the existence of the topic specific discussion groups. This may also be a good time to do another round of interviews by BOCC and Steering Committee members on radio talk shows and through CCTV.

## **9. Self-selected Topic Groups**

As an outcome of the conference, discussion groups are formed (or continued) for topics needing further public conversation. Additional participants are added as needed to ensure balanced discussion. The charge and scope of the groups will be to provide an additional forum and a greater depth of public deliberation around identified topics. Unlike advisory committees or task forces, they are not expected (or encouraged) to develop firm recommendations. Rather, they will develop a summary of deliberations, trade off questions, and areas of agreements/disagreements. Geographic-specific discussions may take place through the mechanisms established by the jurisdictions (Sounding Boards, Advisory Groups.) The groups will be supported by staff and/or citizen leaders (as appropriate), with outcomes presented at Round 2 of the Perspectives Conference.

*Timeframe: Late September – November 2000*

## **10. County Perspectives Conference, Round 2**

The objectives of Round 2 of the conference are as follows:

- Reconvene all of the previous participants, staff, and newly-interested county residents to hear the results of the outreach and reports from the Topic Groups.
- Organize the results into a slate representing the range of community values, opinions, and advice around the various issue areas. This would be forwarded to the policy makers (BOCC, Steering Committee, and Planning Commission) for their consideration in their concluding policy development discussions.
- Provide “combined topic group discussion” opportunities at the conference for groups to come together on panels or in break out sessions.

- Provide information about the range of options for and solicit input on the public's role in the policy deliberations (Phase III).

This second conference will be organized similarly to the first, held on a Saturday morning at WSU. Information will be distributed through public outreach level three and will include display ads, web presence, and other ongoing communications.

*Timeframe: First of November 2000*

## **11. Ongoing Coordination with Planning Commission/Steering Committee**

Throughout the process, regular checkpoints with both the Planning Commission and Steering Committee will be established. A liaison to the Planning Commission will be designated to ensure tracking of issues as they arise. Steering Committee members may be teamed with citizen presenters for presentations to targeted groups, and citizens will be encouraged to participate in updating both the Planning Commission and Steering Committee on outreach efforts and input.

*Timeframe: June – December 2000*

## ***Phase III***

Beginning in January 2001, Phase III will focus on the question “how do we apply the policies fairly and effectively?” The success of Phase III will depend on the groundwork laid in Phase II and the level of community involvement and support in creating the input process used in Phase III. It is anticipated that the final approach to the Phase III public involvement/information will be developed based on input from Round 2 of the conference. Continuing with the need to meet the objectives outlined at the beginning of this approach, Phase III will include several innovative options to engage “newcomers” to the process along with seasoned citizen activists. A few of the options to consider are outlined below:

### **▪ Citizen Think Tank**

This approach is similar to think tanks organized in University settings where topic “experts” come together with informed citizens to deliberate together about specific issues. The outcome of the process may be a recommendation but more likely the outcome is a record of the deliberation, along with questions and tradeoffs for policy makers to consider. Several Think Tanks could be formed around different but linked aspects of the plan update.

### **▪ Interest Area Discussion Groups**

As a result of the conference, interest areas will be defined and discussion groups would be established by staff around the topics. The groups would be an opportunity for citizens who could be impacted by the policies developed to come and participate with others who share their interest. One of the opportunities of this approach is that otherwise unengaged citizens will be more interested in participating in discussions that directly relate to their lives. A challenge will be synthesizing the disparate pieces



into a set of countywide policies. This approach may work best in combination with an oversight group of some kind that has a coordinating responsibility (perhaps the Planning Commission.)

- **Sounding Boards**

Several geographically based (rather than issues based) Sounding Boards could be developed to work through issues specific to their geographic area of influence. The focus of these groups is on individual advice, not group advice. It is not a consensus-building group. While a group recommendation may result, it is not requested or expected. The primary purpose is to provide a forum for the County planners and decision-makers to “sound out” their ideas and proposals and make sure they fully understand issues and reactions of the community and interest groups. It does not need to be closed or have a set membership. All interested parties are welcome to participate. Although their level of responsibility is lower than a traditional advisory group, participants generally develop an increased level of trust in the agency and professionals providing information to the group as the discussion progresses. And the quality of input from the group, like an advisory group, is much higher (more informed) than that gained from a sporadic public gathering.